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of the *Archives of General Psychiatry* (2003; 60:303-310). Dr. Ming T. Tsuang, also of Harvard, was the principal investigator of the study.

But there was "a kind of twist" in the findings, said Toomey.

Although twins who had abused cocaine or amphetamines had poorer scores on several tests, they actually received better scores on a test that measures "visual vigilance," or the ability to pay attention over time. Toomey said that there has been speculation that some people who abuse cocaine are "self-medicating" to make up for some sort of attention deficit. The fact that twins who had abused stimulants performed better on this one measure of attention is interesting, but the results of the current study "cannot really answer that question," Toomey said.

SOURCE: From an article written by Merritt McKinney, *Reuters Health*–New York, dated March 10, 2003.

Study May Explain Why Users of Cocaine Get Sick So Often

Addiction specialists at Harvard University think they have found one reason that cocaine users seem to get sick so often: The drug restricts production of a body protein that triggers immune responses.

Doctors have often noted that cocaine users suffer more infections, including the AIDS virus. One theory holds that this is because cocaine users are more likely to engage in dangerous behavior such as unsafe sex.

But a study published in this month's *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* suggests that cocaine also has a direct effect on the body's infection-fighting chemistry.

John Halpern and colleagues at McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School gave an injection of either cocaine or a placebo to a human volunteer in one arm while placing a catheter in the veins of the volunteer's other arm. Normally, the presence of a foreign device such as a catheter sharply raises the level of interleukin-6, a protein that triggers a cascade of responses within the immune system to repel the invader. That is what happened in the volunteers who received a placebo.
But those who were injected with cocaine saw their interleukin-6 level rise only one-third as much as the placebo subjects after four hours. Dr. Halpern said the results help explain his own experience as a training doctor in a drug-detoxification unit where "almost every single person coming in had a cold."

The study is one of a handful in the US in which doctors injected human volunteers, rather than rats, with cocaine. Dr. Halpern said Harvard's ethics board and government regulators approved the study because the 30 volunteers had all used cocaine on their own between two and five times in the previous month, though none were technically considered addicts. In giving their go-ahead, regulators also considered the study's significance in helping scientists understand how cocaine abuse damages the body.

Dr. Halpern said more research is needed to show whether sniffed cocaine has the same effect as the injected drug and whether the damage to the immune system grows with repeated cocaine use.

SOURCE: From an article in the *Wall Street Journal* written by Peter Landers on March 6, 2003.

CADCA NATIONAL AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ANTI-DRUG EFFORTS

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of American (CADCA) recently announced the recipients of its annual awards that recognize exemplary individuals working to prevent and reduce substance abuse in communities across the country.

Answers to Are You Drug Smart Test

1.a 2.a 3.d 4.b 5.b 6.a 7.a 8.a 9.c 10.b 11.b
12.c 13.a 14.c 15.d 16.b 17.a 18.e 19.d 20.a

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